

JAN 28 1975

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Youth hotline

A toll-free number (800-621-4000) established by Health, Education & Welfare Dept. (HEW) enables runaways to call from anywhere in the country with messages for their parents. [CONSUMER NEWS, Sept. 15, 1974]

In the first 111-day period—from Aug. 12 through Nov. 30, 1974—the hotline received 2,500 calls. HEW says it is now receiving calls at a rate of 1,000 a month.

Average age of the runaways was 16½; 64% were girls & 36% boys. Forty-one percent had run away at least one time previously & 53% stayed away from 5 to 10 days. Figures are not yet available on the number of young people who have returned to their homes. The hotline will remain in operation until further notice.

New consumer office

The Board of Governors of the Federal Reserve System (Fed) has established an Office of Saver & Consumer Affairs. The new unit deals with certain aspects of consumer credit.

In the credit area, Fed shares with several other Federal agencies the administrative responsibilities for a number of laws.

- Under the Securities & Exchange Commission Act of 1934, Fed regulates the margin requirements for consumers' credit purchases of securities.

- Under the Truth in Lending Act, Fed is responsible for determining that banking institutions under its jurisdiction provide consumers with complete information about the costs of the credit that they are purchasing.

- In addition, Fed is now preparing regulations for 2 new laws that will take effect in October 1975—the Equal Credit Opportunity Act & the Fair Credit Billing Act. [CONSUMER NEWS, Nov. 15, 1974]

Vital statistics:
 Frederic Solomon, Director
 Office of Saver & Consumer Affairs
 Federal Reserve System
 20th St. & Constitution Ave. NW
 Washington, DC 20551
 Telephone: 202-452-3401

FIC in DC

The telephone number for the Federal Information Center (FIC) in Washington, DC is: 202-755-8660. This entry was omitted from the list of FICs in CONSUMER NEWS, Dec. 15, 1974.

consumer news

DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE

Office of Consumer Affairs

Virginia H. Knauer, Director

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Aerosols & vinyl chloride

Where do we stand right now with aerosol cans pressurized by vinyl chloride—the chemical substance that has been linked to cancer of the liver?

During 1974, vinyl chloride in aerosol cans was a continuing problem. Three Federal agencies took action against this chemical. Here, CONSUMER NEWS reviews the events of '74, updates the situation & makes suggestions for consumers.

BACKGROUND:

- Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) banned pesticide sprays containing vinyl chloride as a propellant. As a result, manufacturers recalled 19,000 cans. [CONSUMER REGISTER: May 15, 1974. CONSUMER NEWS: Aug. 1, 1974; June 15, 1974; May 15, 1974]

- Food & Drug Administration (FDA) banned the use of vinyl chloride in drugs & cosmetics packaged in aerosol cans. Manufacturers recalled almost 100 branded products, including hair sprays & deodorants. [CONSUMER NEWS: Nov. 1, 1974; Sept. 15, 1974; Aug. 1, 1974; July 15, 1974; June 15, 1974; June 1, 1974]

- Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) banned the use of vinyl chloride in household aerosol products—such as spray paints, solvents & adhesives—under its jurisdiction. [CONSUMER NEWS: Nov. 1, 1974; Sept. 15, 1974; June 15, 1974]

Thus, all banned products in stores were recalled & no new products are being manufactured with vinyl chloride. (According to CPSC, most manufacturers had discontinued use of vinyl chloride as a propellant by late 1973. Many other chemicals are used as propellants—including nitrous oxide, methylene chloride, hydrocarbon propellants [such as propane & butane] & fluorocarbon propellants [such as dichlorodifluoromethane & trichloromonofluoromethane, marketed under various brand names, 2 of which are Freon & Genetron].)

However, since some persons may still have old aerosols containing vinyl chloride, consumers are urged to check all aerosol products on their shelves. Compare brand names & lot numbers with lists printed in CONSUMER NEWS issues cited above. For additional sources, see below.

UPDATE:

Consumers can expect to receive refunds from stores where they bought products regulated by CPSC that contain vinyl chloride. CPSC has the authority to require manufacturers to repurchase banned products. FDA & EPA do not have this authority.

Timing of these refunds is a problem, however. Several producers of

(Continued on page 2)

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CN goes metric

Beginning with this issue, CONSUMER News readers will find terms of measurement—weights, distances, temperatures, dimensions—translated into metric in all articles. It is only a matter of time, most experts agree, before the U.S. officially converts to the metric system.

National Bureau of Standards (NBS) points out that metric is simple, logical & uniform, since all measurements are based on multiples of 10. Metric is also virtually universal. Only 5 countries in the world are not on the metric system—the U.S., Liberia, Yemen, Burma & Brunei.

More & more, the U.S. is moving in the direction of the metric world:

- The Education Amendments of 1974 authorized schools to spend Federal funds to teach metric, beginning with the 1975-76 school year. Although funding has not yet been appropriated, the provision is seen as an indication of Presidential & Congressional support.

- Treasury Dept. recently announced that all domestic & imported wines will have to be bottled in 7 standard metric sizes, based on the liter. (Effective: Jan. 1, 1979.)

- Most canned foods already give the product's weight in grams, as well as in ounces or pounds.

- Manufacturer of 7-Up has announced that this product will be offered in half-liter & one-liter containers—which are about 5% larger than one-pint & one-quart bottles, but will be priced competitively with pints & quarts.

- Several U.S. autos—Mustang II & Pinto—have been designed & built to metric specifications.

For free information about the metric system, write to Metric Information Office, National Bureau of Standards, Washington DC, 20234. Special kits are available from NBS for teachers & students.

Also, you may order these from Superintendent of Documents, Washington, DC 20402: *What About Metric?* (# 0303-01191), 80¢; *Metric America—A decision whose time has come* (C13.10: 345), \$2.25.

(Continued from page 1)

aerosol cans (Pactra Inc, Upland, CA; Sprayon—a Sherwin Williams subsidiary—Cleveland, OH; & Dap, Dayton, OH) have gone to court, challenging CPSC's authority to require manufacturers to repurchase banned products. The case is pending, & a court order has been issued temporarily preventing CPSC from enforcing the repurchasing regulation.

Meanwhile, CPSC reports, some manufacturers notified the commission that they would make refunds. According to CPSC, repurchasing procedure requires manufacturers to notify retailers—through distributors—who will then post lists of products for which refunds are available.

WHAT TO DO:

- Check your home for all aerosol cans that you may have bought before the 1974 bans were announced by EPA, FDA & CPSC. Store cans in safe place until you can learn whether they contain vinyl chloride.
- Write to EPA for most up-to-date listing of banned aerosol insecticides; ask for press releases on banned aerosol products. Write to Office of Public Affairs, A-107, Environmental Protection Agency, Washington, DC 20460.
- Write or call your regional FDA office requesting up-to-date list of drug & cosmetic products in aerosol cans that contain vinyl chloride. Check phone directory for FDA, in U.S. Government listings, under "Health, Education & Welfare Dept."
- Call or write CPSC for information on vinyl chloride & on repurchasing regulations. Write to Consumer Product Safety Commission, Washington, DC 20207, or call toll-free hot line: 800-638-2666 (in Maryland: 800-492-2937). Since CPSC does not yet have complete list of consumer household products containing vinyl chloride, you may want to write directly to manufacturers of items you have. State each product's name & lot number; ask whether the aerosol's propellant contains vinyl chloride.
- If you have insecticides, drugs or cosmetics containing vinyl chloride, dispose of them safely. [See "Watch that aerosol can," page 3]
- If you have a household product (regulated by CPSC) containing vinyl chloride, ask your retailer whether manufacturer is now making refunds.
- Do not mail any aerosol cans to manufacturers—or to anyone else. Postal regulations forbid this.
- Consider whether the convenience of aerosols outweighs the various hazards involved. Think about using the same or similar products in non-aerosol containers. These, frequently, are cheaper than aerosols.
- If you do continue using aerosols, take precautions. Read labels & follow CPSC safety suggestions. [See "Watch that aerosol can," page 3]

FOOTNOTE:

In other related moves—

- EPA has undertaken a study of the environmental impact of chemicals in the fluorocarbon group, some of which are used as aerosol propellants. Some scientists have speculated that fluorocarbons released by aerosols may be threatening the ozone layer that hangs above the earth & filters out the ultraviolet radiation in sunlight.

- **Occupational Safety & Health Administration (OSHA)** developed health safety standards (effective Jan. 1) for workers whose jobs expose them to vinyl chloride. [CONSUMER REGISTER: Nov. 1, 1974; June 15, 1974; June 1, 1974]

- FDA discontinued the experimental use (carried on with approval of Treasury Dept.) of plastic liquor bottles made with polyvinyl chloride because the chemical "migrated" into the liquor. [CONSUMER REGISTER: June 1, 1974; July 1, 1973]

Watch that aerosol can!

If you are using aerosol cans, handle them with care. Whether they contain hair spray, deodorant, paint, insecticide or any other product, these pressurized cans present 3 serious risks to consumers, according to **Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC)**.

They may explode (as result of high heat or puncturing). They may be flammable (if used near matches, burning cigarettes or open flames). They may be toxic (if large quantities are inhaled in an unventilated room). CPSC reports that nearly 5,000 persons receive emergency room treatment every year for injuries associated with aerosols.

Nevertheless, aerosols are popular. About 300 products are packaged in pressurized cans, & more than 2 billion cans were manufactured in the U.S. during 1973 alone.

CPSC urges consumers to take safety precautions when using aerosols. You can minimize the risks if you:

- Read instructions on can.
- Have plenty of ventilation when you spray indoors.
- Don't smoke while spraying.
- Don't use sprays near heating appliances, gas stoves or other flame or heat sources.
- Keep your body well covered & wash exposed areas after spraying—especially when using insecticides. (NOTE: This would not apply to certain drug & cosmetic products, such as antiperspirants & deodorants, which are specifically designed to be sprayed on the body. However, directions usually caution that use of these should be discontinued in case of skin irritation.)
- Stop use at first sign of dizziness, nausea, headache, blurred vision or skin irritation. Seek fresh air quickly & call doctor if symptoms persist or are severe.
- Don't use aerosols around food. (NOTE: In the case of household products & insecticides, the product itself may create toxicity if sprayed on food. This precaution would not apply to aerosol food products which are, of course, designed to be eaten. Furthermore, foods are pressurized only by propellants approved by FDA as safe food additives.)
- Store containers in cool place.
- Don't expose cans to direct sunlight, radiators, stoves or other heat sources.
- Don't store aerosols in car during hot weather.
- Keep aerosols out of reach of children; teach them the dangers.
- Dispose of aerosols with other non-burnable trash.
- Do not puncture containers. Never use devices being sold for puncturing aerosol cans; these can be dangerous.
- Do not throw "empty" aerosols in incinerators or trash compactors. They still contain propellants that may cause explosions.

For more details, request CPSC fact sheet on aerosols. Write to Consumer Product Safety Commission, Washington, DC 20207.

Save energy on your lighting

Get all the light you pay for. Dust your lamps, lighting fixtures & bulbs frequently.

When possible, use fluorescent tubes. They are more efficient than incandescent bulbs. A 40-watt fluorescent tube gives more light than 3 60-watt incandescent bulbs—& can save you about \$10 a year in electricity.

Costs on new cars

Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) reports that about $\frac{1}{3}$ of the higher price tag on 1975 cars is the result of quality improvements—most of them made to meet standards set by Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), under the Clean Air Act. (The remaining $\frac{2}{3}$ of 1975's higher price tags result from increased production & materials costs.)

BLS estimates that there is an average increase of \$386 in manufacturers' suggested retail prices for '75 cars, compared to '74 models. Of this average increase, \$129.90 goes for quality improvements:

- \$119.20 for improved exhaust emission systems. Changes include installation of catalytic converter systems [CONSUMER NEWS, Dec. 1, 1974] & related changes such as heat shielding, insulation & necessary revisions in exhaust emission systems.

- \$10.70 for added safety features, including changes made to comply with proposed Federal motor vehicle safety standards for braking systems, passenger restraint systems & roof crush resistance.

The BLS average price increase does not represent a weighted average. It is based on a small sample of 16 domestic passenger cars, selected to reflect general trends in consumers' auto purchases. Cars in sample were made by General Motors, Ford, Chrysler & American Motors.

The BLS average of \$386 is somewhat lower than the figure of \$449 quoted by "Automotive News," a trade journal, as a weighted average increase for the entire industry (covering the same 4 manufacturers). The "Automotive News" figure represents a straight 10% increase over prices for 1974 models.

Minimum wage up

The new Federal minimum wage for most covered workers is now \$2.10 an hour. The increase—from \$2—became effective Jan. 1, & it affects 58 million workers.

There are 2 main exceptions:

- Domestic workers must now receive a minimum hourly wage of \$2, up from \$1.90. This group, which numbers about 1.5 million, came under the law in May 1974.
- Agriculture workers, who had been receiving \$1.60 per hour, will now receive \$1.80. Included here are about $\frac{1}{2}$ million workers.

Warning!

"SPACE SAVER" TIRES (again!)-B. F. Goodrich Co. is now notifying owners of cars equipped with their "Space Saver" tires that special precautions must be taken before these tires can be used. As reported in CONSUMER NEWS [Sept. 15, 1974], Space Savers should be taken to Goodrich dealers for complete inspection, including a test inflation. This warning is being repeated because of a CONSUMER NEWS reader's report of not getting a close inspection of his tires. Consumers should see that tires are fully inflated by dealer during inspection—or ask for replacements. This warning does not apply to Space Savers on 1975 model cars.

Recalls

• Food & Drug Administration (FDA) announces the recall of canned tuna under 2 labels. They are: "Van Camp's Brand Chunk Light Tuna . . . Ralston Purina Co., St. Louis, Mo. . . ." (lot numbers CL 207/50F1C); & "Chicken-of-the-Sea Brand Chunk Light Tuna . . . Ralston Purina Co. . . ." packed in cases of 24 or 48 cans (lot numbers CL207/501D; CL207/50F2B; CL 107/50G1C; CL207/50F1B; CL307/50F1J; CL307/50G1G; & CL207/50F2N). Recalled by manufacturer. Distribution was national.

Underprocessing resulted in histamine contamination. Affected food causes burning sensations & might, under certain conditions, be toxic.

New Federal publications

The following publications are available from Superintendent of Documents, Government Printing Office, Washington, DC 20402; make check or money order payable to Superintendent of Documents.

Shopper's Guide (Agriculture Dept.'s 1974 yearbook, with tips on food, materials, equipment, gardening, services & recreation), published by Agriculture; #0100-03300; \$5.70.

Bicycle & Pedestrian Facilities in the Federal-aid Highway Program (a guide for groups planning to develop bicycle & pedestrian pathways along highways built with Federal funds), published by Transportation Dept.; #5001-0082; 45¢.

Energy Conservation Program Guide for Industry & Commerce (handbook outlining steps for setting up energy conservation program), published by National Bureau of Standards; #C13.11:115; \$2.50.

Banned Products, Vol. III, Part 1, (products banned by Consumer Product Safety Commission as of July 31, 1974), published by the commission; #5203-000-42; \$1.90.

U.S. Government Manual/1974-75 (describes major programs, functions & activities of all Federal agencies), published by General Services Administration; #2203-00907; \$5.75.

U.S. Facilities & Programs for Children with Severe Mental Illnesses—A Directory (lists more than 400 programs serving children who are autistic, schizophrenic or who have other severe mental disorders), published by National Institute of Mental Health; #1724-00393; \$3.30.

Quasars, Pulsars, Black Holes . . . & HEAOs (explanations & color illustrations of new astronomical phenomena observed during the past decade, & descriptions of High-Energy Astronomy Observatories to be launched in 1977), published by National Aeronautics & Space Administration; #3300-00542; 80¢.

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